

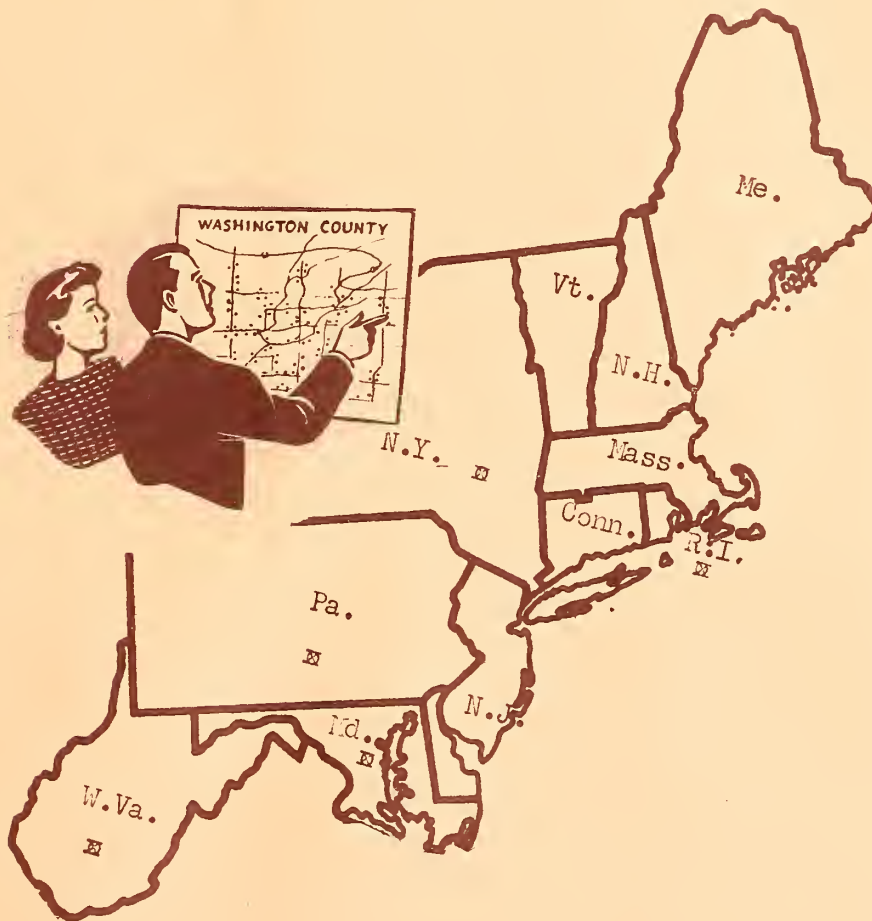
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Extension

Rural Sociology

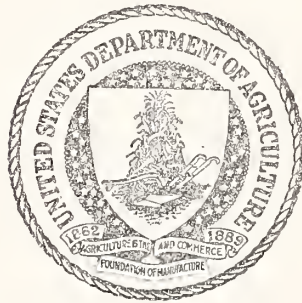
in the Northeast



NORTHEAST RURAL SOCIOLOGY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EXTENSION

August 1960

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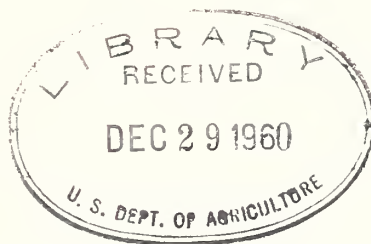
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NORTHEAST RURAL SOCIOLOGY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EXTENSION
August 1960

A short study for only
limited distribution

Members of the Subcommittee on Extension Sociology
Northeast Rural Sociology Committee
1957-60

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The parent Northeast Rural Sociology Committee
is a group which operates in cooperation with
the State land-grant agricultural colleges and
the Farm Foundation.

Purposes

This publication was prepared for the several purposes, as follows:

1. To inform State extension services and sociologists about the current status of extension sociology in the Northeast.
2. To describe areas of current activity in State extension sociology programs.
3. To identify points of progress, and the need and direction of further development.

What is extension rural sociology?

Extension rural sociology is the application of the science of sociology to rural-centered problems and to the problems of cooperative extension work with rural people and others. It applies the general science of sociology, which deals with the study of the group life of people -- informal groups, organizations, locality groups, and others -- along with the values and attitudes, leadership, group processes, and the relation of these to socio-economic conditions and human behavior. Rural sociology is all this with particular reference to rural people and conditions.

Extension sociologists are more and more being called upon for counsel and assistance by extension staff and other people to help identify problems, plan programs, and to solve group problems of participation, organization, and action. Back of this trend are the tremendous socio-economic changes that have occurred throughout the rural Northeast in the last 10 or 20 years.

There is also more interest among communities, counties, and organizations in doing things for themselves. For this they seek guidance in understanding their own situations, goals and aspirations. As a result more and more teamwork is being provided among organizations, agencies, and communities. A greater demand for leadership for effective organization and for planning and conducting programs is evident today than ever before.

The basic objective of extension rural sociology is to achieve improvement in the social science understandings and skills for extension staff and for community leaders. The aim is to achieve continued effective extension program planning and teaching, improved community organization and services, improved handling of human relations among rural people, and develop more and better rural leadership. A major task in accomplishing this objective is to teach and assist extension staff members as well as others. In essence, the extension sociologist has two basic clienteles: (1) extension staff members, and (2) other professional workers and volunteer leaders. The extension sociologist's basic roles are teacher, interpreter, consultant, analyst and evaluator.

The extent and scope of rural sociology in the extension work of the Northeast region is briefly outlined in the table on the next 2 pages.

NUMBER OF PERSONS AND AREAS OF WORK IN EXTENSION SOCIOLOGY PROGRAMS, NORTHEAST REGION, 1960

State	Number positions in extension sociology*	Activities in main areas of program content			
		Program Planning	Leadership Development and Group Techniques	Community Improvement and Resource Development	Research
Connecticut	0 **	Population and other basic data, by <u>resident</u> sociologists	0	Some leadership in Rural Development, by resident sociologists	0
Delaware	0	0	0	0	0
Maine	0 *	Population and other basic data, by <u>resident</u> sociologist	Some staff training and mass media teaching by human relations specia- list	Rural church institute, by <u>resident</u> sociologist	0
Maryland	1/2 ***	Basic data; staff con- sultation, training in planning methods	Teaches in State Homemakers Short Course; some staff consultation and training	Provides data, advises agents on com- munity studies, helps local leaders in self-studies; some leadership in Rural Development	Assisted Extension in making cer- tain evaluation studies, then interprets findings in staff training and consultations; relates to station research
Massachusetts	0	Population and other basic data by economist	Incidental training help, by recreation specialist	Incidental training help by <u>recreation</u> specialist	0
New Hampshire	0 *	Population and other basic data, by <u>resident</u> sociologist	Some staff training and mass media teaching by <u>human relations specia-</u> list	Resident sociologist consults on Farm and Home Development; Rural ministers institute	Some research on communication by resident sociologist
New Jersey	0	0	Some staff training, <u>mass media</u> teaching, and materials by <u>human</u> relations specialist	0	0

* Does not include sociologists in extension studies, nor recreation and health specialists.

** Resident teaching and/or experiment station research sociology in college of agriculture, but no extension sociology personnel. Resident sociologists in nearly all States provide some limited, incidental sociology service to Extension and to other State-local requests.

*** Position now temporarily vacant.

Activities in main areas of program content					
State	Number positions in extension sociology	Program Planning	Leadership Development and Group Techniques	Community Improvement and Resource Development	Research
New York	2	Population and other basic data for county staffs and planning committees; training in planning and group action processes; staff consultation to extension and others	Develops staff training conferences; provides materials; trains professional and lay leaders in extension and in farm and community organization; consultant service to extension and others; mass media, periodic material and publications	Consultant service; training in problem solving studies of selected communities and improvement programs; develops understanding and liaison among health programs; extension and community activities; consultation in organization of health programs and self-studies; mass media and periodic materials	Relates to extension studies and other department research; includes findings in extension sociology work
Pennsylvania	2	Basic data for county staffs and planning committees; some training in planning and action processes; staff consultation	Staff and leader training in selected counties; 4-H conferences; discussion methods for various extension programs; mass media; consultant service to extension staff and others; publications	Work with selected communities; some staff and leader training; mass media information provided; consultant service to extension, other agencies leaders	Relates to extension studies and other department research; includes findings in extension sociology work
Rhode Island	1/2	Basic data for county staffs and planning committees; some training in group methods; staff consultation	Training in State Homemakers conference; staff consultant service and training	0	Basic research in community organization for staff use in extension adjustments; special service studies for State Council on Aging and other groups
Vermont	0	Population and other basic data by <u>economist</u>	Staff training conferences; 4-H leader training discussion groups; mass media by <u>human relations</u> specialist	Rural church institute	0
West Virginia	3/4	Population and other basic data in cooperation with resident research sociologist; limited staff consultation and training in planning methods	Staff consultation and some help in conferences; consultant service to extension and others; assistance given staff conferences; community club leader training in counties and districts	Leadership of Extension-Industry Community Development Programs; trains agents and leaders; staff and case community consultations; mass media, newsletters, publications; relates Rural Development and community programs	Some assistance to extension staff members doing studies; relates to department research; extension training program

Rather extensive work is underway in two States, a minimum level of work in three other States, while little or no work is being provided in the remaining seven States. In a few States limited work also is being done by persons titled as extension family life or human relations specialists.

Two States have sociologists in charge of extension studies programs. All sociologists in extension in the Northeast have the Ph. D. degree in this field.

From time to time several sociologists without extension status are asked to help implement certain extension programs or activities. And in some States resident sociology personnel also give a limited amount of what might be called off-campus service to various groups and agencies upon request, with or without relation to the regular extension organization.

Clearly, there is an increasing awareness of the contribution that sociology can make to Extension, even though the contribution in a number of States is far below the level needed for effective leadership and service to extension administrations, agents, and local leaders.

The contributions of rural sociology to Extension cover a broad field. The preceding table and field observations indicate that States with a well developed rural sociology program provide State and county workers much assistance in the whole field of group work, leadership development and community organization. Sociologists also provide needed data and training helpful in program planning and public affairs education.

Extension sociology also deals with subject matter relating to several of the areas outlined in the Scope Report of 1958. Undoubtedly more emphasis on the sociological significance of these areas will be needed in the next few years. This is especially true since many extension workers have had only bare minimum training, if any, in the social sciences.

Distinction between rural sociology and recreation has become more clarified through the years. In New York and Pennsylvania, the extension recreation program is administratively responsible to the chairman of the rural sociology department or extension section, but the persons are titled "recreation specialists," not rural sociologists.

Extension faces a changing world

New problems and programs point up need for more rural sociology assistance to extension staff members and to the people. Rapid change characterizes American society today, and undoubtedly the tempo of change will increase. Adjustment to change is the Number One problem in the Northeast.

Several facts stand out:-

- * Today in the Northeast only about 5 percent of the total population live on commercial farms. In nearly half of these cases one or more members of the family are earning off-farm income for the family or for himself.

From 35 to over 50 percent of the farm operators in Northeast States obtain more income from sources other than farming than from farming, and 40 to 45 percent of the farm operators worked off their farms 100 days or more in 1954. A study in Massachusetts showed that between 1945 and 1955 central cities lost an average of 11 percent in population, while suburban fringe areas increased 20 percent and rural townships 24 percent. Between 1950 and 1960 the recent census shows that in 8 Northeast metropolitan areas, the central cities lost an average of 8 percent in population, while their suburban areas gained an average of 47.3 percent.

- * The changing community raises important questions about serving both new and present extension clientele.
- * One effect of urbanization upon community life is the decline of population in some places and the growing pains of others. This has produced more complex organization, with problems of maintaining or expanding services and particularly of creating community spirit and organization conducive to solving common problems.

Community services are in great demand now, and are increasing as people move farther and farther into the outlying rural areas of the Northeast. Improved telephone service, sanitation systems, fire and police protection, law enforcement, recreation facilities, community meeting places, new or larger schools and redirected church programs are some of the things that people are seeking. New commercial services and trading centers are springing up farther and farther out from cities.

Throughout the Northeast there is much concern about rural zoning, tax structure, local government, and regional planning. Questions of land use arise as we see the expanding network of highways, decentralization of industry, and the desire to preserve more land for public uses.

- * Technological changes in agriculture require some kind of adjustments on nearly every farm. Commercial farmers need guidance in making adjustments in management and technology. At the same time other farmers need help to adjust -- some to increase, and some to decrease their efforts in agriculture -- or shift away from it altogether and work elsewhere. Rural youth are especially faced with decisions about the future and what to do in order to successfully adapt to nonfarm employment and urban situations.

In the United States as a whole, farm output per man hour has increased 257 percent since 1930. Farm production supported 7 people in 1900, about 10 in 1930, and an estimated 24 in 1957. The number of farms in the Northeast declined 32 percent between 1947 and 1958, and the farm population declined 17 percent. Capital investment on Northeast dairy farms increased from \$9600 in 1940 to \$36,100 in 1958, according to a recent study.

- * Economic conditions vary among the States according to the trends of key industries, such as coal in West Virginia, thus, affecting living levels making for considerable variation in levels of living between sections within States as well as between States. Jobs are steadily being upgraded, with relatively more in skilled and professional types of work and fewer in the unskilled types. This trend will continue, and it has implications for the adjustment of rural young people. Turnpikes and super-highways are changing the socio-economy of some areas, as evidenced by researches made, for example, by the Department of Rural Sociology, University of Connecticut.
- * Vertical integration and specification buying are new major developments that will change the relation of the farm enterprise to the community and the relation of the family to the farm enterprise. A recent study of broiler production in Maine showed that contract fieldmen visited 55 percent of the places an average of 1 1/2 times a week, and 2 times or more per week on 17 percent of the farms. Business integration problems also arise as cooperatives and other farm groups revise their organizations or programs in order to become more efficient and to deal better with other larger economic units and problems.

Changes challenge Extension and rural sociology

Regardless of whether given socio-economic changes are considered good or bad, people do need help in making satisfactory adjustments. The Extension Service likewise faces the problems of realigning resources and altering methods or procedures so as to better serve new clientele; better deal with new problems faced by new clientele and by farmers. It is evident that educational programs, including extension, must be shaped somewhat differently than in the past. Numerous adjustments are already being made in Northeast extension.

Thus, leadership development, community organization, and improved long-range program planning take on new and more significant meanings than in the past. A type of extension worker and local organization leader is needed who can guide and assist people in analyzing and solving their problems. This kind of a leader must first be enlisted, then trained to be better prepared for his responsibilities. He needs and wants to increase his understandings and skills in working with different people and agencies in developing sound long-range programs of mutual benefit.

To put it another way, the changing rural scene does not necessarily call for a change in the basic objectives of Extension or the extension worker. Rather it calls for a new understanding of certain rapidly changing situations on the one hand, and of the slower changing social systems with which he is dealing. The county extension agent still works within one county, but the socio-economic environments of the people in the county have changed as have their needs and concerns.

Comprehensive, long-range planning seems to be the most effective method of dealing with present changes and of preparing for still more change. Overall program planning can develop leadership, build intelligent group action, reduce inter-group tensions, increase sensitivity to problem situations, and lead to programs of meaningful education and action. These improvements will speed up adjustments and make for better use of our resources -- natural and human, farm and nonfarm, for greater net income and happier family and community living. But extension agents need and want more know-how in how to produce such improvements.

Every extension worker must take into account social trends and the changing social structure in his county, in order to effectively lead in planning procedures and follow-up education programs. Improved planning and more effective community and group action also require the development of local leadership, the improvement of local fact-finding, and the expert knowledge of the county and State professional workers as a resource. From this comes broader extension programs which deal with the varied concerns and needs of more diverse populations living in changing communities.

Extension must and is becoming more concerned about giving greater attention to:

- Economic growth, including nonfarm employment opportunities for both farm and nonfarm local people, particularly youth, as well as improved commercial agriculture.

- School and church organization and programs to fit new conditions, recreation programs for all ages, health education and services.

- Developing concerned and trained leadership.

- Inter-agency cooperation.

- Bringing about more effective local organizational procedures for studying situations, identifying problems and getting things done.

Added to all this is the need for a constructive public relations program aimed to acquaint nonfarm people with the problems and national importance of agriculture. Extension will likely be giving more attention to developing understanding among nonfarm publics. For example, State extension people often speak before farm organizations. More and more they are accepting opportunities to speak before conventions of chambers of commerce, parent-teacher associations, League of Women Voters, labor unions, industrial development commissions, and the like.

All these important needs go hand in hand with efficient farm production and with higher levels of family and community living.

Extension is becoming more concerned with such needs as shown by greater attention being given to long-range program planning; rural resource development; expanding programs in management, marketing and public affairs; and to leadership development and community improvement as emphasized in the Scope Report. State extension services in the Northeast are taking the Scope Report seriously and starting to implement the purposes for which it was prepared.

The current emphasis on redefining the scope and responsibility of Extension -- its clientele and its educational programs -- makes it all the more important that extension personnel at all levels be informed as to the socio-economic changes and trends taking place, and the implications of these for the organization of programs and methods.

The development of extension programs to meet the expanding demands of urban, suburban, and rural nonfarm people, as well as stepped up intensive work with commercial farmers, has stimulated requests from county and State extension workers throughout the Northeast for help in understanding the social changes, communication channels and the social systems through which various groups of people can be most effectively served.

How Extension rural sociology must help

Clearly the future of extension also challenges extension rural sociologists to meet the needs for assistance that extension workers and community leaders of today and tomorrow need and want.

Again referring back to the accompanying table, one can more clearly appreciate the role and contribution of extension sociology programs. More specifically, extension rural sociologists in the Northeast are now, or need and want to, provide information, assistance, and counsel to help extension staff members and other people deal with such tasks and needs as:

Supplying new population data, other current social facts, and interpreting social changes for extension work and community affairs.

Identifying leaders and training them in leadership.

Increasing the performance of leaders through increasing their understanding about the principles and methods of leadership.

Strengthening program planning organization and improving the effectiveness of planning committees and meetings.

Identifying community problems and training groups in methods of solving them.

Providing information and analysis about the social causes, effects, and consequences of given public policies for use in the development or modification of policies and in educational work about them. In this connection the goals and values of people will be receiving expanding attention in the years ahead.

Training extension workers and local leaders to lead discussions about public problems and programs.

Increasing participation and interest in organizations and programs.

Understanding human values as a basis for determining ways to reach and motivate people toward different practices or to make adjustments.

Recognizing community resources and encouraging cooperative activity of people, agencies, and organizations.

Helping develop or strengthen organizational procedures and leadership for given extension programs or community development.

Analyzing extension organization and methods in the light of changed conditions and clarifying new developments in Extension.

Underlying all these areas of work, of course, is the interpretation of social science research findings and their application to extension work.

Other challenges

Despite the lack of personnel in many States, it behooves extension sociologists already at work to give even more attention to those activities of greatest assistance to the State extension services in putting the Scope Report into action. Almost every section mentions problems or programs which have some kind of sociological implications.

Extension sociologists specialize in human organization. They will need to prepare for more effective service as the problems of agriculture and community living become more complex. It may also be desirable for extension sociologists to develop more explicit programs, in order to establish boundary lines of activity and assure needed concentration on major problems. Special work on particular subjects in certain communities or counties are serving as useful experiments or demonstrations.

More training for work in extension sociology is needed. Today most graduate teaching and research thesis programs in rural sociology departments are quite strongly oriented toward research. It would be desirable if such training could also include more extension orientation.

An upward trend in this direction can be noted. Close working relationships of extension sociologists with other extension personnel and with sociology resident staff people are expanding, and are continually important. Facilities for fact gathering and service research are also necessary to effective extension sociology work.

In view of the above analysis and increasing program demands, it also seems reasonable that extension sociologists will improve their contributions by working closely together in the Northeast, and with those in other parts of the country. There are opportunities to develop regional printed materials and to concentrate efforts on common major programs. Also the value of continuous exchange of information and ideas among the State workers, among themselves and through the Federal Extension Service, needs to be emphasized. More research findings and authoritative writings are becoming available. Joint efforts are needed to interpret and present this kind of information. Regional and national cooperative activities should produce both common professional standards and common effort on mutual major problems.

The Northeast Rural Sociology Subcommittee on Extension Sociology, the work of the Extension Committee of the Rural Sociological Society, and the National Workshop for Extension Sociologists held at Cornell University in August 1959, are examples of efforts that promote such objectives. Both the Farm Foundation and the new Adjustment Centers are also proving to be useful resources in promoting cooperative efforts and common goals among sociologists and with other disciplines.

As stated in the foreword of the Workshop Summary by Administrator Ferguson of FES, "...there will be even greater need for social science contributions in this new decade -- the Significant Sixties -- as we continue to face the problems of adjustment occasioned by rapidly changing times."

Extension sociologists during the last few years have made some good beginnings toward laying a solid foundation that can meet this great challenge and opportunity.

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